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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006398

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/09/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [AM](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY HITCHES ARMENIA POLICY TO NAGORNO-KARABAKH

REF: A. ANKARA 6198

[B](#). STATE 278584

[C](#). STATE 286070

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: In a October 8 discussion with poloff, MFA Caucasus and Central Asia Director Ertan Tezgor confirmed that the GOT clearly linked opening the Armenian border and resuming diplomatic relations to Armenian concessions on Nagorno-Karabakh (NK). Tezgor brushed off concerns this would substantially delay bilateral progress, but predicted no breakthroughs in bilateral relations until 2004. He was unconcerned about the effect of a potential Armenian genocide resolution by the U.S. Congress on bilateral relations and said the GOT would consider a proposal to allow diplomatic passport holders to cross the border freely. End Summary.

A Clear Link Between Bilateral Relations and NK

[1](#)2. (C) Unlike previous statements by MFA officials that bilateral relations and NK were "separate but parallel" tracks (ref A), Tezgor confirmed what FM Oskanian reported to U/S Grossman on September 25 (ref B): Turkey clearly linked opening the border and resumption of diplomatic relations to progress between Armenia and Azerbaijan on Nagorno-Karabakh (NK). "Armenia cannot just approach Turkey," he said, it also had to deal with Azerbaijan. Tezgor reiterated the GOT proposal for the GOAM to withdraw from four NK cantons, which he said would permit 350,000 IDPs to return, and to open rail links.

[1](#)3. (C) Tezgor brushed off the idea that linking bilateral relations to NK would substantially delay progress between Turkey and Armenia. He said Turkey and Armenia were "on a good track." Armenia would have no incentive to deal on NK if Turkey opened the border and resumed relations without any NK link. He also worried about public criticism if Turkey opened the border without any NK concessions from Armenia.

[1](#)4. (C) Tezgor said Turkey also wanted Armenia to publicly renounce territorial claims inside Turkey, which he claimed were found in Art. 11 of Armenia's Declaration of Independence (referring to "Western Armenia") and Art 13 of the Constitution (referring to Mt. Ararat as one of Armenia's national symbols), although he conceded Armenia posed no real territorial threat to Turkey. The GOAM was prepared to make such a pronouncement, but only upon the resumption of diplomatic relations.

No Breakthrough Until Next Year

[1](#)5. (C) Tezgor foresaw no breakthroughs in Turkish-Armenian relations until spring 2004. He expected Ilham Aliyev would win Azerbaijan's October 15 elections and would need time to form a government before he could deal on NK. Tezgor said FM Gul would next meet with FM Oskanian on the margins of the December OSCE meeting, and he predicted progress in further bilateral meetings in January and February. In the meantime, the two countries would focus on expanded NGO contacts, joint restoration of historical monuments, and expanded airline service. Tezgor ruled out any other significant movement, saying that it would have to come as part of a "package" that included NK.

Not Concerned About Genocide Resolution

[1](#)6. (C) Tezgor professed to be unconcerned about the prospect that lack of movement with Armenia would fuel another push for an Armenian genocide resolution in the U.S. Congress. He was confident such a resolution would have no effect on government-to-government relations and that the GOT could

manage Turkish public opinion. He claimed that France's genocide resolution had no lasting effect and predicted a similar only-temporary reaction to a U.S. resolution.

Diplomatic Passport Border Crossing Proposal

17. (C) Tezgor said the GOT would consider the proposal to allow diplomatic passport holders from both nations to cross the border (ref C). He added that the two governments had not discussed including third-country diplomats in the proposal, but had discussed including official delegations.

18. (C) Comment: We have observed a similar vacillation over the last year. Speaking with the same officials we alternatively hear a stronger or weaker link between bilateral Armenian-Turkish relations and NK. Given the transition in Azerbaijan, we are clearly in the swing to a stronger link. Tezgor's seeming minimizing of the potential impact of any Armenian resolution is not credible. Turkish officials always emphasize the impact "anti-Turkish" resolutions could have. The Turks have just canceled a Swiss FM's visit because of the passage of a genocide resolution by one canton, and our French colleagues say they still feel the chill, particularly with the military, from their resolution several years later. End Comment.

EDELMAN